



State Legislative Update for the Week of April 6 - 10, 2015

Tuesday, April 7, 2015

Senate Session

Bill introductions of veterans interest:

Senators Saxhaug and Carlson introduced:

SF 2024: A bill for an act relating to state government; canceling money from Department of Education; appropriating money to Department of Veterans Affairs. Referred to the Committee on Finance.

The Senate moved to accept the invitation of the House of Representatives to meet in Joint Convention in the House Chamber at 6:45 p.m., Thursday, April 9, 2015, to receive the message of the Honorable Mark Dayton, Governor of the State of Minnesota. The motion prevailed.

House Session

Bill introductions of veterans interest:

Dettmer and Howe introduced:

HF 2164: A bill for an act relating to state government; canceling money from Department of Education; appropriating money to Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on State Government Finance.

Committee Hearings

Committee: **House Property Tax and Local Government Finance Division**

Chair: Rep. Steve Drazkowski

Agenda:

HF 147 (Dettmer): Surviving spouses of deceased service members and permanently disabled veterans market value exclusion extended. This bill provides that the surviving spouse of (a) a permanently and totally disabled veteran, or (b) a service member who dies due to a service-related cause, will receive the \$300,000 homestead market value exclusion each year, until the spouse remarries or disposes of the property. Under current law this benefit to the surviving spouse expires after eight years. The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the Omnibus Tax bill.

Committee: **Senate Judiciary Budget Division, Justice Programs Subdivision**

Chair: Sen. Bobby Joe Champion

Agenda:

SF 851 (Carlson, J.): Crisis de-escalation techniques training grant appropriation. This bill appropriates \$100,000 in each year of the biennium to the commissioner of public safety for training state and local community safety personnel in the use of crisis de-escalation techniques. The commissioner must consult with the Minnesota Peace Officers and Training Board, and may consult with other relevant individuals, when selecting a training service provider. The training service provider must have a demonstrated understanding of veterans' issues. The training opportunities must be provided statewide. The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the Judiciary Budget Omnibus bill.

Committee: **Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development Budget Division**

Chair: Sen. Terri Bonoff

Agenda:

SF 653 (Sheran): Veterans-to-agriculture pilot program establishment and appropriation. This bill requires the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) to establish a pilot program that encourages veterans to enter agricultural and food production-related career fields. \$150,000 is appropriated to MnSCU in FY 2016, and \$600,000 is appropriated in FY 2017 for this purpose. The pilot program is to be coordinated by the Southern Minnesota Center for excellence for agriculture at the North Mankato campus of South Central College, in collaboration with a number of additional entities with relevant expertise. In addition to South Central College, funds are appropriated to offer the program at up to six additional colleges in FY 2017, including one in the metro area. Enrollees in the pilot program would undergo an intensive four-to-eight week training involving academic study, employer-outreach and job development, and the development of career-building skills. Upon completion enrollees would earn a certificate of completion or other appropriate academic credit. The bill, as amended, was laid over for possible inclusion in the Omnibus Higher Education and Workforce Development Budget bill.

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

Committee Hearings

Committee: **Senate Health and Human Services Budget Division**

Chair: Sen. Tony Lourey

Agenda:

SF 1691 (Hawj): Southeast Asian veterans culturally specific mental health services appropriation. This bill appropriates \$100,000 in FY2016 for grants to nonprofit organizations to provide resources and referrals for culturally specific mental health services to Southeast Asian veterans born before 1965 who do not qualify for services to veterans discharged from the United States armed forces. The bill was recommended to pass for possible inclusion in the Omnibus Health and Human Services Budget bill.

Committee: **House Higher Education Policy and Finance**

Chair: Rep. Bud Nornes

Agenda:

HF 545 (Johnson): Veterans-to-agriculture pilot program established, and money appropriated. This bill requires the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) to establish a pilot program that encourages veterans to enter agricultural and food production-related career fields. \$150,000 is appropriated to MnSCU in FY 2016, and \$600,000 is appropriated in FY 2017 for this purpose. The pilot program is to be coordinated by the Southern Minnesota Center for excellence for agriculture at the North Mankato campus of South Central College, in collaboration with a number of additional entities with relevant expertise. In addition to South Central College, funds are appropriated to offer the program at up to five additional colleges in FY 2017, including one in the metro area and six in greater Minnesota. Enrollees in the pilot program would undergo an intensive four-to-eight week training involving academic study, employer-outreach and job development, and the development of career-building skills. Upon completion enrollees would earn a certificate of completion or other appropriate academic credit. A report to the legislature on program operations, participation, job placements, and unmet needs is required no later than December 15, 2017. The bill, as amended, was laid over for possible inclusion in the Omnibus Higher Education bill.

Committee: **Senate State Departments and Veterans Budget Division, Veterans and Military Affairs Subdivision**

Chair: Sen. Jim Carlson

Agenda:

SF 2024 (Saxhaug): Education department expedited and temporary licensing for former and current members of the military, funds provision and funds transfer authorization. This bill would cancel certain unspent funds from the Department of Education, estimated to be \$44,000, and appropriate \$44,000 in FY2016 to the Department of Veterans Affairs for transfer to the Department of Education to implement the expedited and temporary licensing for former and current members of the military. The appropriation would be available until June 30, 2017. The bill was moved and laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus bill.

SF 425 (Saxhaug): Military affairs and veterans affairs appropriations. This bill appropriates money to the Department of Military Affairs for training facilities maintenance, general support and enlistment incentives, and to the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans service organizations, the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, Honor Guards, the Minnesota GI bill, the Gold Star program, the County Veterans Service Offices and the Veterans Homes. The language expands the permitted uses of money in the Support Our Troops account so that grants may be given to certain nonprofits and foundations, requires the Commissioner to provide an annual report on the use of grants made from the SOT account, requires the Commissioner to establish in rules a method to calculate a maintenance charge for domiciliary residents, and repeals obsolete statutes that provided for creation and duties of a Board of Governors of Big Island Veterans Camp. The bill, as amended, was recommended to pass and re-referred to the State Departments and Veterans Budget Division.

Thursday, April 9, 2015

Senate Session

Bill introductions of veterans interest: None

House Session

Bill introductions of veterans interest: None

The House passed **HF 283**, Camp Ripley nearby lands designated as sentinel landscape, coordinating committee created and report required, 126 – 0.

Committee Hearings

Committee: **House State Government Finance**

Chair: Rep. Sarah Anderson

Agenda:

HF 1190 (Kresha): Minnesota Military Museum funding provided, and money appropriated. This bill appropriates \$50,000 in FY16 and \$50,000 in FY17 to the Minnesota Military Museum to fund the archivist position. This is in addition to the base funding for FY16-17. The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in the Omnibus State Government Finance bill.

Committee: **House Capital Investment**

Chair: Rep. Paul Torkelson

Agenda:

Presentation and discussion on the Governor's bonding proposal. The Governor's bonding recommendations for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs include \$4.4M for renovation and upgrade of the five state Veterans Homes and \$650,000 for pre-design and design to reconstruction the bridge located across Minnehaha Creek linking South Minnehaha Drive and the Minneapolis Veterans Home. For the Department of Military Affairs, the Governor's proposal provides for \$1.4M to match a federal contribution of \$1.4M to renovate the Owatonna Armory; \$4.5M to match a federal contribution of \$4.5m to design, construct, furnish and equip a new facility to house the West St. Paul Armory; and \$10M for asset preservation needs at armory and training buildings throughout the state.

Committee: **Senate State Departments and Veterans Budget Division**

Chair: Sen. Tom Saxhaug

Agenda:

SF 888 (Saxhaug): State government, veterans and military affairs appropriation bill. This bill appropriates money for state operations and the Departments of Military and Veterans Affairs. SF425, which outlines funding and policy changes for the Departments of Military and Veterans Affairs, is incorporated in the amended SF888. The spreadsheet was reviewed by the Fiscal Analyst as was the bill language by Senate Counsel.

**Upcoming Committee Hearings of Veterans Interest
Week of April 13 – 17, 2015**

Monday, April 13, 2015

Committee: **Senate State Departments and Veterans Budget Division**

Chair: Sen. Tom Saxhaug

Room: 112 Capitol

Time: 4:00 PM

Agenda:

SF 888 (Saxhaug): State government, veterans and military affairs appropriations bill.
Resume discussion of the Omnibus Budget Bill.

Tuesday, April 14, 2015

Committee: **Senate State Departments and Veterans Budget Division**

Chair: Sen. Tom Saxhaug

Room: 112 Capitol

Time: 2:00 PM

Agenda:

SF 888 (Saxhaug): State government, veterans and military affairs appropriations bill.
Final discussion and passage of the Omnibus Budget Bill.

Committee: **Senate Finance – Subcommittee on Legacy**

Chair: Sen. Richard Cohen

Room: 15 Capitol

Time: 6:00 PM

Agenda:

SF 353 (Saxhaug): Veterans voices month appropriation.